A Flock of Birds

CIVILISATIONS ART FAIR
5 – 9 JUNE 2024
RUE DES MINIMES 3, BRUSSELS

"Everyone likes birds. What wild creature is more accessible to our eyes and ears, as close to us and everyone in the world, as universal as a bird?"

- Sir David Attenborough

For its second participation of the Civilizations art fair, Duende Art Projects has selected a group of 20 antique African artworks depicting or featuring birds. As "A Flock of Birds" explores avian inspiration across the African continent, we present sculptures from Ivory Coast, Guinea, Nigeria, Ghana, the Republic of Benin, and Burkina Faso. Given their natural faculty of flight, all over Africa birds were associated with transcendence and other supernatural abilities. Already in Greek mythology, birds were considered to be messengers of the gods, having the ability to communicate between the mortal and divine realm, just as the bird is a common symbol of communication and wisdom in many West African societies. Avian sculptures could represent deities, commemorate events, elicit moral lessons, evoke sayings, or recall certain bird's characteristics. Close observation of the animals' peculiar behaviours made them inexhaustible sources of inspiration, while talented artists with great craftsmanship created wonderful works of art for us to enjoy.

Senufo

Bird figure
Anonymous Senufo artist
Ivory Coast
Early 20th century
Wood, paint
Height: 40 cm

Provenance:
Collection Christian Debenest, Abidjan, Ivory Coast
By descent through family, 2016
Pierre Bergé, Paris, 8 April 2016, lot 99.
Galerie David Serra, Barcelona, Spain, 2017
Private Collection, Brussels, Belgium, 2024

Toussian

Pendant
Anonymous Toussian artist
Burkina Faso
19th century
Copper alloy
Height: 5,5 cm

Provenance:
Private collection, Brussels, Belgium

Ijo

Bird headdress
Anonymous Ijo artist
Nigeria
Early 20th century
Wood
Height: 45 cm

Provenance:
Pierre Langlois, Paris, France
By descent through family, 2023
Native, Brussels, 14 December 2023, lot 86.
Duende Art Projects, Antwerp, Belgium, 2023

Yoruba

Crown (*ade isheshe*)
Anonymous Yoruba artist
Nigeria
19th century or earlier
Copper alloy
Height: 26,5 cm

Provenance:
Private collection, Brussels, Belgium

Akan

Bird figure
Anonymous Akan artist
Ghana
Late 19th century or earlier
Copper alloy
Height: 6,5 cm

Provenance:
Private collection, Brussels, Belgium

Fon

Power object (*bocio*)
Anonymous Fon artist
Republic of Benin
Mid 20th century
Duck skull, padlocks, keys, whistle, fibers
Height: 15 cm

Provenance:
Private Collection, UK, 2014
Bruno Claessens, Antwerp, Belgium, 2014-2024
Duende Art Projects, Antwerp, Belgium, 2024

Edo

Comb
Anonymous Edo artist
Nigeria
Ealry 20th century
Bone
Height: 19 cm

Provenance:
Private Collection, UK
Adam Prout, Didbrook, UK, 2024
Duende Art Projects, Antwerp, Belgium, 2024

Nuna

Pendant
Anonymous Gurunsi or Nuna artist
Burkina Faso
Early 20th century
Copper Alloy
Height: 9 cm

Provenance:
Thomas G.B. Wheelock Collection, New York, USA
On long term loan to Ithaca College Museum (#621.69L)
Thomas G.B. Wheelock estate, New York, USA
Private collection, Brussels, Belgium

Publication:
LaGamma (Alisa), "Art and Oracle. African Art and Rituals of Divination",
New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Abrams, 2000, p. 62, #38b
Roy (Christopher D). & Thomas G.B. Wheelock. "Land of the Flying Masks:
Art and Culture in Burkina Faso-the Thomas G.B. Wheelock collection",
Munich, 2007, fig. 376

Exhibition:
"Art and Oracle. African Art and Rituals of Divination",
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 25 April-30 July 2000

Yoruba

Figure (*onile*)
Anonymous Yoruba artist
Abeokuta, Nigeria
19th century
Copper alloy
Height: 16,5 cm

Provenance:
Acquired from a Hausa trader, Mallam Abba Kallah in the 1960s
The Balint B. Denes Collection, Arizona, USA, 2022
Anderson & Garland, Newcastle, 30 June 2022, lot 946.
Duende Art Projects, Antwerp, Belgium, 2022

Yoruba

Figure (*onile*)
Anonymous Yoruba artist
Nigeria
19th century
Copper alloy
Height: 17 cm

Provenance:
Private collection, Brussels, Belgium

Bwa

Pendant
Anonymous Bwa artist
Burkina Faso
19th century
Copper alloy
Height: 4,5 cm

Provenance:
Private collection, Brussels, Belgium

Bwa

Pendant
Anonymous Bwa artist
Burkina Faso
19th century
Copper alloy
Height: 4,5 cm

Provenance:
Private collection, Brussels, Belgium

Pendant
Anonymous Bwa artist
Burkina Faso
19th century
Copper alloy
Height: 4,5 cm

Provenance:
Private collection, Brussels, Belgium

Akan

Pendant
Anonymous Akan artist
Ghana
16th-17th century
Copper alloy
Height: 3 cm

Provenance:
Private collection, Brussels, Belgium

Baga

Bird headdress finial (*a-Bamp or a-Bemp*)
Anonymous Baga artist
Guinea
Early 20th century
Wood
Height: 53 cm

Provenance:
Private Collection, France
Galerie Charles-Wesley Hourdé, Paris, France, 2019
Private Collection, France
Giquello, Paris, 8 November 2023, lot 148.
Duende Art Projects, Antwerp, Belgium, 2023

Akan

Box with lid (*adakawa*)
Anonymous Akan artist
Ghana
19th century or earlier
Copper alloy
Height: 2,5 cm

Provenance:
Maurice Bonnefoy Collection,
Paris, France (#3151)
Private collection, Brussels, Belgium

Box with lid (*adakawa*)
Anonymous Akan artist
Ghana
19th century or earlier
Copper alloy
Height: 3 cm

Provenance:
Maurice Bonnefoy Collection,
Paris, France (#3023)
Private collection, Brussels, Belgium

Akan

Goldweight
Anonymous Akan artist
Ghana
19th century or earlier
Copper alloy
Height: 3 cm

Provenance:
Private collection, Brussels, Belgium

Goldweight
Anonymous Akan artist
Ghana
19th century or earlier
Copper alloy
Height: 2,8 cm

Provenance:
Private collection, Brussels, Belgium

Akan

Container (*kuduo*)
Anonymous Akan artist
Ghana
17th-18th century
Copper alloy
Height: 8,5 cm

Provenance:
Private collection, Brussels, Belgium

Container (*kuduo*)
Anonymous Akan artist
Ghana
17th-18th century
Copper alloy
Height: 9,5 cm

Provenance:
Patrick van de Velde, Belgium, 2010
Private collection, Brussels, Belgium

Akan

Bracelet
Anonymous Akan artist
Ghana
Early 20th century or before
Gold alloy
Length: 27 cm

Provenance:
Galerie Afrique/Alain Dufour, Saint Maur/Ramatuelle, France
Galerie Walu, Zürich, Switzerland
Private Collection, 2019
Hammer Auktionen, Basel, 29 November 2019, lot 25.
Private collection, Brussels, Belgium, 2019-2024

Fon

Bird
Anonymous Fon artist
Republic of Benin
Early 20th century
Copper alloy
Height: 19 cm

Provenance:
Samir Borro, Brussels, Belgium
Private Collection, Brussels, Belgium, 2024

Bembe

Hunting Charm
Anonymous Bembe artist

D.R. Congo
Early 20th century
Wood. 14 cm

Provenance
Jean Willy Mestach (1926-2014), Brussels, Belgium
Marc Leo Felix, Brussels, acquired by trade from the above
Harold Gray, Washington, D.C.,
acquired from the above on January 16, 1984
Sotheby's, New York, "African, Oceanic, and Pre-Columbian Art",
16 May 2013. Lot 165
Collection Jean-Louis Danis

Publication
Robbins (Warren M.) and Nooter (Nancy Ingram),
"African Art in American Collections,
Survey 1989", Washington/London:
Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989:477, #1223

List of Exhibitions | Duende Art Projects

2024 Echoes II, Antwerp, Belgium

2024 The World is Dancing a Masquerade, Antwerp, Belgium

2024 Invocations by Sibusiso Ngwazi, Antwerp, Belgium

2024 Mini-Mania, Civilisations Art Fair, Brussels, Belgium

2023 PAN, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

2023 Echoes, Knokke-Heist, Belgium

2023 Savoir-Faire, Parcours des Mondes, Paris, France

2023 Alliances by Hadassa Ngamba, Antwerp, Belgium

2023 Transient Beings, Antwerp, Belgium

2023 Je ne sais quoi, African art with a surreal twist, Antwerp, Belgium

2023 A World Unheard by Raymond Fuyana, Antwerp, Belgium

2023 The Blind Side by Sibusiso Ngwazi, Antwerp, Belgium

2023 Manifestations, Antwerp, Belgium

2023 Pathfinder by Mostaff Muchawaya, Antwerp, Belgium

2022 Living with Art, Duende Magazine, online exhibition

2022 Van Strien Collection, PAN, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

2022 Sweet Dreams, Parcours des Mondes, Paris, France

2022 Unsettled, Zwartzusters Monastery, Antwerp, Belgium

2021 Threads, Zwartzusters Monastery, Antwerp, Belgium

Duende Art Projects was founded in Antwerp, Belgium in 2021 by Bruno Claessens, previously the European director of the African art department at Christie's Paris. A passionate art expert with 15 years of ample experience in the African art market, Claessens has published four books on classical African art: Ere Ibeji (2013), Baule Monkeys (2016), UNÛ (2021) & Shared Passion (2023). Throughout his career, he gained a profound knowledge of art of the African continent, both classical and contemporary, and has developed a great network of collectors, curators, and scholars as well as strong institutional ties.

Duende Art Projects' ambition is to inspire people by sharing our profound passion for the art of the African continent. Our purpose is to strengthen Africa's visibility and significance within the global and diverse art world through a strong digital presence and frequent curated exhibitions on unique locations. The gallery wishes to open up the western-dominated perspective in the art world, and offers a well-rounded and fresh take on African art, both classical and contemporary. Establishing strategic collaborations with other galleries and institutions worldwide, it wishes to create opportunities to support and promote art and artists from the African continent.

Duende is a Spanish word that is difficult to translate; it is a concept related to flamenco, referring to a magical moment of inspiration and genius. It is the heightened state of emotion when encountering a moving work of art, a sudden experience that can't be captured, a goosebumps moment. While Spanish in origin, the word has an African ring to it - indeed it is a universal concept, and indicative of the gallery's ambitions. Duende Art Projects goes beyond labels and reveals the art's multiplicity of layers. Duende Art Projects' values are more than just words. We live our values and believe that galleries with a strong culture and a higher goal do better. Our values are to be genuine, personal, responsible and open-minded. We pursue growth and learning, embrace and drive change through innovation, are passionate and determined, and aim to create both inspirational as joyous moments while offering premium quality artworks.

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PROJECTS
THE GIFT
1 - 29 JUNE 2024
THU-SAT, 13 -18H
AND BY APPOINTMENT
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